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Ontario. Treasury Dept. Motion  
Picture Censorship and Theatre  
Inspection Branch.

Annual report of the Motion  
Picture Censorship and Theatre  
Inspection Branch, 1938/39.





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Ontario. Treasury Dept. Motion Picture  
Censorship and Theatre Inspection Branch

# Ontario Treasury Department

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## ANNUAL REPORT

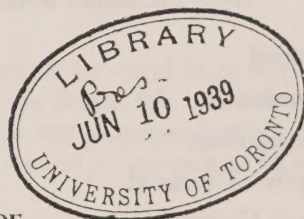
OF THE

### Motion Picture Censorship and Theatre Inspection Branch

FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 31st

1939

1938/39



PRINTED BY ORDER OF

HON. M. F. HEPBURN, PRIME MINISTER  
AND PROVINCIAL TREASURER



ONTARIO

TORONTO

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1939

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HON. MITCHELL F. HEPBURN,  
Prime Minister and Provincial Treasurer of Ontario,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Toronto, Ontario.

Sir:

I have the honour to present the report of the Board of Censors of Motion Pictures and Theatre Inspection Branch for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 1939.

During the year films were submitted to the Board for censorship by fourteen duly licensed Exchanges.

These Exchanges were:

Colonial	Paramount	Superior
Columbia	Peerless	Twentieth Century-Fox
Cosmopolitan	Perfection	United Artists
Empire—Universal	Regal	Vitagraph
Grand National	R.K.O.	

The Board reports a marked increase in the number of films submitted for censorship during the year. The number increased from 2,476 during 1937-38 to 2,681 during the twelve months covered here. Eighty-five percent of these films were passed without eliminations and four films were not approved but, after certain alterations, two of these were passed by your Appeal Board.

In reviewing these films the Board has borne in mind its rules which prohibit ridicule of any religious denomination or race of people; presentation of subjects tending to debase morals; prolonged or passionate love scenes when suggesting immorality; loose conduct between men and women; excessive drinking and subjects which might provide instruction in crime.



The Board presents the following statement for your consideration:

	Number of Films	Alterations
United States .....	2,465	337
Great Britain .....	80	27
Canada .....	34	.....
Foreign .....	102	16
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,681	380
Rejected .....	2	
(United States 1)		
(Russian 1)		

The criticisms expressed in previous reports by your Board of British films which failed to measure up to requirements do not apply during the year under review. The record runs and increased attendance at many of these films abundantly demonstrated that the public appreciated British productions. Some of the best pictures of the year were British directed. These successes clearly indicate that the British producer can adapt his product to the American market. The Board hopes that he will, during the coming year, take advantage of the opportunities presented to him.

During the past year, when war clouds covered the world in general and international relations were strained to the limit, the Board felt constrained to use extreme caution and care to avoid the spread of any propaganda which was contrary to the views and opinions of a democratic race of people such as we have in Canada.

Your Board, for the first time, refers to the French language film. These films were exhibited to some extent generally, but almost entirely in cities, towns and communities of the province with a large French speaking population. The Board co-operates with the distributor and exhibitor who obviously finds it more difficult to market his French language film on account of the limited opportunities. The Board feels it is justified in extending what assistance it can to the distributor seeking to provide amusement for our French Canadian citizens.

French Films	Subjects	Features	Shorts
35 mm. ....	333	183	150
16 mm. ....	43	42	1

These films were shown in Ottawa, Sudbury, Sturgeon Falls, Rockland, Windsor, Curran, Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Toronto, North Bay, London, Gogama, Kingston and Hamilton.

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During the year under review, your Board observed a change in the attitude of the United States producer from the position which he adopted in 1931 namely, that the function of the film was to offer pure amusement and that it should avoid subjects of a "Topical Character and Propaganda".

The possibility that the coming year will witness, in the production of films of a topical character, a still more marked departure from the position taken in 1934 is evident in the programmes of 1939 as announced by the major producers. It is reported that the producers will take a more pronounced position upon topics dealing with world-wide events.

Your Board believes it is impossible to avoid reference through the cinema to the "isms" of Europe and world-wide conditions which undoubtedly affect the lives of the people of this continent. Your Board will insist that films of this character be in line with thought in this Province and in keeping with the policy expressed by your Government on world affairs.

An increase of 63 foreign language films is reported for the year with the total standing at 102, as compared with 39 a year ago. These films compared, in some instances, favourably with film emanating from the larger centers of the United States. A very small number of the subjects presented contained what was accepted as definitely destructive propaganda calculated to arouse in new Canadians a resentment of our institutions. These subjects were largely historical and legendary.

A great number of these subjects were exhibited under the auspices of organizations, cultural and religious groups.

It has been the pleasure of this Department to co-operate with representatives of foreign governments and whenever possible to meet their views concerning topics which are of interest to their people.

The number of foreign language films submitted:

Russian .....	23	Czecho-Slovakian .....	2
Polish .....	13	Finnish .....	7
Yiddish .....	14	Italian .....	6
Hungarian .....	16	Greek .....	2
Ukranian .....	3	Chinese .....	6
German .....	4	French .....	5
Swedish .....	1		

The Board is continuing its policy of not only demanding certified transcripts of dialogue, but it also secures the assistance of competent translators for foreign language films. Of the foreign films, 77 were standard or 35 mm. and 25 were 16 mm.



Three alterations were made in 15 standard Russian films and one was rejected by the Board. Two of the Polish films were subject to alterations; one Yiddish film was subject to alteration. In the 16 mm. films, two German and two Russian films were subject to eliminations.

After mature consideration, the Board, on one occasion, ordered the return of a subject to its vaults and insisted that this film, which, in some centers, had been disapproved of, should be shown to the theatregoer only in its original state. At the same time it rejected a mutilated version of the subject. The Board's position was that the original version, while unconventional, did not contravene censorship regulations. In its opinion, however, the mutilated version would have been unacceptable to the people of Ontario. The film, which had been mutilated, revealed that censorship can often emphasize that which it seeks to avert.

The following table shows the improvement in standard in recent years:

Year	Number Submitted	Altered		Approved		Rejected	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1931-32	2,188	698	31.9	1,455	66.5	35	1.6
1932-33	2,219	701	31.6	1,494	67.3	24	1.1
1933-34	2,161	816	37.7	1,309	60.6	36	1.7
1935-36	2,186	415	18.9	1,763	80.8	8	.4
1936-37	2,107	369	17.5	1,735	82.3	3	.2
1937-38	2,476	478	19.3	1,992	80.4	4	.16
1938-39	2,681	380	14.17	2,299	85.75	2	.074

The Board received many complaints regarding Gangster pictures but we feel, after reviewing these pictures, for the past five or six years, that they do arouse the public to a consciousness of certain aspects of crime and if not applicable to the Canadian scene, emphasize conditions which we are determined shall not be tolerated here.

Today we face a situation much more serious than shown in the gangster films. World peace and security is constantly jeopardized by national gangsters more dangerous than any we have ever known and there is no reason why motion pictures should not be used to combat them.

Records of the Board show that 2,056 standard films were dealt with during the year. The following record is hereby presented:

	Passed	Altered	Rejected	Under Consideration	Total
Features .....	287	206	1	...	494
Trailers .....	496	41	...	...	537
Miscellaneous .....	528	51	1	...	580
Comedies .....	229	3	...	...	232
News Reels .....	203	10	...	...	213
	<u>1,743</u>	<u>311</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>...</u>	<u>2,056</u>

Greater control has been exercised by the Board over 16 mm. films. The 16 mm. films provide amusement to those residing in remote parts of the Province where regulation theatres are not located. Films of this type are increasing in use and are serving an excellent purpose in bringing entertainment to people who would have to do without, or drive long distances to towns and cities. The 16 mm. films are brought to the Board from recognized Exchanges, but some of this type film is "bootlegged" into the Province from the United States. These are usually of the vulgar and obscene variety, which, if discovered, result in court action against the offender.

The following table reveals the number of 16 mm. films dealt with by the Board:

Year	Submitted	Altered	Rejected	Approved
1936-37 .....	112	19	1	92
1937-38 .....	288	43	1	244
1938-39 .....	544	69	...	475

There are now three licensed Exchanges in Ontario for distribution of 16 mm. films. These were established during the past year following the re-writing of the Regulations. These Exchanges rent, buy and sell this type of film for distribution throughout the Province.

With the increase in the number of films submitted there has been a decrease in the number of advertising specimens. The total number of specimens dealt with by the Board was 29,383 of which 156 were rejected entirely, while 118 were displayed and published with certain changes. During the preceding year the number of specimens approved by the Board, after censorship, was 68, while a year ago there were 153 pieces rejected. During the previous year there were 30,289 pieces of advertising examined.

Previous reports have called attention to the character of certain advertising, particularly coloured posters and lobby cards, which misrepresent the films they are intended to announce. Certain misinformed criticism of motion pictures has been inspired by such advertising. The Board finds it necessary to withhold its approval of certain advertising because of its objectional character



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and misleading nature. However, advertising agencies, which work in close touch with the motion picture industry, are now showing an increased desire to co-operate with the Board on all occasions. Several specimens rejected by us were so treated by their artists that any objectionable part disappeared.

It is a matter of regret that so many film subjects are unsuitable for young people. We do, from time to time, receive objections as to the effect of these films upon the minds of children and the unsuitability of many subjects for children. Many subjects are unsuitable for family entertainment. These threaten not only to decrease the patronage of the young people but of their parents also. However, the Board demanded that the exhibitor forewarn everyone what to expect. Extreme violence, horrors calculated to frighten children are completely eliminated from production when possible. In this connection, the Board would repeat what it has so often pointed out to others, that parents and guardians have as much a duty in supervising their children's selection of screen entertainment as they have in regard to plays and books.

Judging from the small number of complaints that reach this office, the work of the Board appears to have met with considerable success. A large proportion of the criticisms received originated from individuals who had never seen a film themselves and either based their criticisms on hearsay or something which they had seen outside the cinema. We have tried to prevent the exhibition of any film which is likely to give dislike to public taste.

During the past year the total number of alterations made were 2,845, distributed as follows:

Features .....	1,949
Comedies .....	7
Miscellaneous and Trailers .....	295
News Reels .....	90
Serials .....	164
16 mm. Films .....	340

The Board desires to acknowledge the efforts of distributors of news reels to meet our requirements for Canadian and British items in the weekly reels. The news reel is a valuable agent in familiarizing our citizens with many of their own national events. We hope, if only to a limited extent, that these reels will prove to advantage in this Province.

During the fiscal year the regulations passed pursuant to the Theatres and Cinematographs Act were amended as it was the opinion of this Department that a number of them had become antiquated. These regulations affected the construction of theatres in smaller municipalities and also affected mainly the schooling or apprenticeship periods of our projectionists. Emphasis was placed on the practical examinations of these men.

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Theatre construction and remodelling in the Province compares very favourably with previous years, there being twelve new theatres and fifteen extensive alterations.

During the year only one film fire and three building fires were reported as against three film fires and four building fires last year. We consider that the rigid inspection of projection rooms and thorough examinations, both written and practical, given projectionists, is largely responsible for this enviable record.

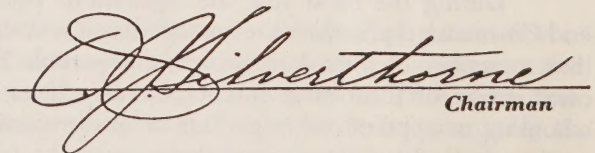
Six theatres and two projectionists were prosecuted for infractions of the Theatres and Cinematographs Act; ten licenses were suspended, seven projectionists, one miscellaneous and two public halls. The following is a table of licenses issued during the year:

Theatres .....	372
Public Halls .....	2,736
Miscellaneous .....	120
Projectionists .....	706
Apprentices.....	341
Travelling Shows .....	234

Films are now and then submitted to the Board which raise important questions of public policy, and of social or religious nature. The Board has always held itself free to ask for expert information when the need arises—sometimes it is from public departments or representatives from social or religious organizations. The consultation of these authorities is very useful and indeed essential, when films deal with subjects that touch national interests, religious beliefs and practices. The Board offers its sincere gratitude for the willingness and readiness with which the officials of all these departments have given their time and experience to the guidance of the Board. The Board welcomes suggestions from all organizations of a public or semi-public nature. We invite these criticisms, realizing by so doing that we are in touch with public opinion and must profit by same.

The Board wishes to record herewith its sense of great obligation to yourself as head of this Department, the Deputy Ministers, Controller of Revenue, as well as other officials of the Department for unfailing co-operation at all times.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Chairman

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